Lam Chow Siong #85 Speaker 12

**Text: James 3:1**

“Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.” (NIV)

**Questions to ask:**

1. What is the context? Who is speaking to whom?

Ans: James is writing to the Jewish believers who were scattered in different parts of the Roman empire after the persecution against the church during Herod’s reign.

1. Why did James write this sentence?

Ans: (a) Perhaps, there was news of many Jewish believers teaching and preaching Christ according to their own interpretations, which James disagreed with, or (b) James wanted to warn those who wished to teach and preach Christ of the seriousness of this task, that the word of God must be handled with all seriousness and care, or both (a) and (b).

1. Who are included in the “we”?

Ans: James and all who desired to teach and preach the word of God.

1. What does the judgment refer to?

Ans: It refers to (a) people holding teachers top a higher standard, or (b) the last judgment when all the living and the dead will be judged, or possibly both.

1. Why will teachers be judged more strictly?

Ans: Teachers and preachers are commonly looked upon as upholders of truths and moral standards. Those who handle the word of God correctly have the ability to save lives (James 1v21). Conversely, those who abuse the word of God have the power to lead others astray, and as false teachers, they will be severely judged in the last days (2 Peter 2:1-3).

**Exegetical Outline**

Exegetical Idea: The reason only a few Jewish Christians should aspire to be teachers and preachers of God’s word is that, more than the common believers, they will be held accountable for their actions and words, and be judged more severely, now and in the last days.

I. The reason only a few Jewish Christians should aspire to be teachers and preachers of God’s word is that, more than the common believers, they will be held accountable for their actions and words.

1. More than the common believers, they will be held accountable for their actions (not showing favouritism, but showing mercy-chapter 2).
2. More than the common believers, they will be held accountable for their words (controlling the tongue-chapter 3).

II. The reason only a few Jewish Christians should aspire to be teachers and preachers of God’s word is that they will be judged more severely, now and in the last days.

1. Compared to common believers, teachers and preachers will be judged more severely by men as they are perceived to be upholders of truths and conduct.
2. God will be hold them accountable for their handling of the word, which has the power to save souls if applied correctly, or the power to corrupt souls if misused or abused.

**Reference**

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV*. Nashville:Thomas Nelson, 1997.

Stedman, Ray. *Adventuring Through the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1997.

*The Serendipity Bible Study Book*. Edited by Lyman Coleman et al. Grand Rapids, MI: Lamplighter Books, 1986.

Lam Chow Siong (Box #85) Speaker 12

**Want to teach and preach God’s word? Consider carefully.**

**James 3:1 (cyclical deductive)**

**Purpose: To urge believers to take the task of teaching and preaching God’s word seriously.**

**Introduction**

1. **Arouse interest**: Have you ever had a teacher who taught you the wrong thing? What is your opinion of him? On the contrary, have you ever had a wise and interesting teacher? What influence has this person had on you? Teachers are influential.
2. **Need**: The role of a Bible teacher is sacred. Listen to what James has to say about the heavy responsibilities of those who desire to teach God’s word in James 3:1.
3. **Subject**: Want to teach and preach God’s word? Consider carefully
4. **Background**: Perhaps, there was news of many Jewish believers teaching and preaching Christ according to their own interpretations, which James disagreed with. So James wanted to warn those who wished to teach and preach Christ of the serious-ness of this task, that the word of God must be handled with all seriousness and care.
5. **Preview**: Today’s text tells us why not many of us should consider to teach and preach God’s word. James 3:1 implies that essentially, teachers and preachers of God’s word will be judged by both men and God. Let us first look at how they are judged by men…

**I. Teachers are judged by men in their actions (implied in chapter 2)**

A. They must show no favouritism to the rich nor despise the poor (2:1-13).

B. They must show mercy through good deeds (2:14-26).

**II. Teachers are judged by men in their speech (implied in chapter 3)**

1. They must tame their tongue by not boasting about themselves
2. They must tame their tongue by not slandering others
3. They must tame their tongue by not flattering others to gain favour

**III. Teachers are judged by God (implied through other passages in NT)**

1. Teachers and preachers who handle the word of God correctly have the ability to save lives (James 1v21).
2. Conversely, those who lead others astray through false teaching will be severely judged (2 Peter 2:1-3).

**Conclusion**

1. We must take the task of teaching and preaching of God’s word seriously (Main Idea restated).
2. We must study and interpret the word faithfully, in SBC and beyond.
3. We must also keep a tight watch over our actions and words.

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Sermon (full script) for James 3:1

Good morning, brothers and sisters!

Today, I count it a privilege to share the word of God with you.

Before I begin, I would like to ask you a question, “How many of you would like to teach or preach the word of God?” Please raise your hand if you do.

Well, I applaud you for your noble aspiration, but today, I want you to consider your intention carefully, to consider your intention with care, and fully.

When we were growing up, I am sure we have had many teachers, some are interesting and engaging while others are simply a bore. The interesting ones can make us want to learn more about the subject while the boring ones can cause us to lose interest in the subject. You see, teachers are influential; they have the power to engage and motivate us, or the ability to repel us and drive us far from our learning. Teachers are influential.

However, today, our focus is on Bible teachers, and Bible teachers are more influential than our school teachers. They not only teach us the word of God and help us know more about God, they also help us to know God personally. They share the word and promises of God with us and help us gain salvation and sanctification through Jesus Christ. This is the greatest blessing one can impart to another human being.

The question is, if a Bible teacher is so influential, why is it that James in today’s scripture (James 3:1) tells us not to aspire to be a Bible teacher? First, let us read the verse together.

“Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

Let me give you some background to the book of James. In this book, James was writing to the Jewish believers who were scattered about in the vast Roman empire, teaching them some practical aspects of Christian living. Perhaps, there was news of many Jewish believers teaching and preaching Christ according to their own interpretations, which James disagreed with. Thus, he wanted to warn those who wished to teach and preach Christ of the heavy responsibility of this task, that the word of God must be handled with all seriousness and care.

James gives us a very simple and direct answer why not many of us should aspire to be teachers. **Those who teach the word of God will be judged more strictly.** We can ask a few questions based on this answer: (1) Who are the judges? (2) What will they be judging the teachers on? Well, the answers are not found in this verse, but can be gathered from the many verses before and after this verse. By this, I mean James, chapter 2 and chapter 3.

Firstly, **Bible teachers will be judged by men**. In chapter 2, with regards to their actions, James instructs the believers that they must show no favouritism to the rich nor despise the poor (2:1-13). In addition, they must show mercy through good deeds (2:14-26). Indeed, such actions as showing favouritism to the rich or despising the poor were common in those days, and they are still common in some churches today. Teachers who teach God’s word must be careful not to act in this way.

In chapter 3, with regards to their speech, James instructs the believers that they must tame their tongue by not boasting about themselves, by not slandering others, and by not flattering others to gain favour. All of us humans are prone to using our tongue to elevate ourselves, to put others down and to win the favour of those people who are useful or beneficial to us.

Secondly, and more severely, **Bible teachers will be judged by God**. I am sure that when James wrote about judgement, he must have in mind also the judgement of God, as is taught in other Bible passages such as James 1:21 and 2 Peter 2:1-3.

James 1v21 tells us that teachers and preachers who handle the word of God correctly have the ability to save lives. And for that, they will be rewarded by God. Conversely, 2 Peter 2:1-3 makes it clear that those who lead others astray through false teaching will be severely judged by God.

I chanced upon this saying by Henry Adams, a 19th century American historian, while preparing for this message. He said, “*A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”* In view of our context today, which is about being or becoming a Bible teacher, I would like to insert the word “Bible” before the word “teacher”. In addition, I would like to suggest looking at the word “eternity” from a theological perspective, that we either end up in heaven- when we are shown the right way by true Bible teachers- or in hell- when we are misled by false Bible teachers. Indeed, a teacher affects eternity.

Brothers and sisters, now that we know that Bible teachers and preachers will be judged more strictly by men and God, do you still aspire to be Bible teachers and preachers? If your answer is ‘no’ or ‘I need to think about it again’, I have preached an effective message based on James 3:1. If your answer is ‘yes’, then I have preached an even more effective message based on the same verse, for I have helped you clarify and concretize your calling and conviction to teach and preach.

Knowing that the standards are high for teachers and preachers of God’s word, let me encourage you to take immediate actions to

1. take the task of teaching and preaching God’s word seriously

2. study and interpret the word faithfully, in SBC and beyond, and

3. keep a tight watch over your actions and words.

Let us pray.